

LONDON WORKERS GROUP

T/SOR/3/SC/126

Electronic benefits cited

By our Technology Correspondent

A union report published yesterday lists the benefits of the electronic office: economic growth, greater leisure, better jobs for some. It also says that word-processing systems (computerised typewriters) will aggravate the rising unemployment of clerks and typists and destroy jobs for the next generation.

The dilemma is analysed in a background paper prepared by officials of the white-collar union APEX for the union's

working party on microelectronics and the office. The working party, which began work yesterday, is asked to report in time for the union conference in March.

Its proposals will include a code of practice on the implementation of office automation "so that it will benefit both office employees and working people as a whole." The code would be part of APEX's contribution to the general debate on microelectronics.

The background paper says that although there are fewer

than 7,000 word-processing units so far installed in Britain (compared with 45,000 in Germany and 400,000 in the United States), the growth potential is "vast." Equipment suppliers claim cost savings of over 50 per cent through a combination of staff cuts and increased output.

The report illustrates the differing impacts on staff: typists are in favour because their jobs become more interesting, secretaries and shorthand typists resistant because their skills are threatened.

Job search 'will get harder'

THE Manpower Services Commission said today that the task of finding a job for everyone is likely to be "more formidable than ever" in the years ahead.

The commission says in its 1978 review that it will be

"difficult to reduce unemployment by 1982 below the levels of mid-1974."

Problems will be heightened by the expected increase in the labour force of about 750,000 women, compared with 350,000 men, a reflection of the high birth rate in the late

1950s and early 1960s.

The commission says there is an over-riding need to secure a competitive and efficient national economy, to control inflation and secure steady growth of the economy — a precondition for creating more jobs.

Basnett calls for super Welfare State

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LONDON WORKERS GROUP CAN BE CONTACTED
BOX W, 123 UPPER ST, LONDON, N1.

BULLETIN NUMBER

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Print Report:

TIMES NEWSPAPERS LOCKOUT

The Times Newspapers lockout of their whole staff is the most serious confrontation between a newspaper management and the print unions in the long history of newspapers. Some 4,000 workers, including journalists, were locked out on Nov 30th and there is no indication at this stage when, and under what conditions, the newspapers will be published again. Every newspaper in Fleet St is watching this struggle "like vultures" in the words of Joe Wade, the General Secretary of the National Graphical Association - the compositors union. They are not the only ones: the general printing industry represented by the Printing Federation, is also watching the outcome of this struggle. As Joe Wade has said, Times Newspapers were "not only hell-bent on introducing new technology on their terms. They are also hell bent on bulldozing the unions and their members into abject surrender over their demands by threats of suspension and possible total closure": this closure has now taken place.

Times Moves The position of the NGA in this situation of not being prepared to negotiate under the terms of a management ultimatum during the period up to Nov 30th is therefore understandable. The technological changes which the Times wishes to introduce means completely knocking out the traditional GMA job of composing, either by linotype (the old system) or by direct input into a computer via a video display unit by giving this process to journalists - if they are prepared to work it. So far as the NGA is concerned, and it is one of the oldest craft unions in the country, it is a crucial battle which, if they lose it, means an enormous loss of jobs and of the membership of this key print union.

NGA Reaction The reaction of the NGA members has been mixed. Also locked-out because they would not accept the demands of management to use VDUs, the journalists on The Times refused to take over the jobs traditionally done by compositors, but those on the Sunday Times capitulated, risking a confrontation with the compositors if they do. But their capitulation failed to stop the closure, since the overwhelming majority of chapels rejected the business proposals.

Agreements Torn Up The Times Newspapers unilaterally tore up every single on-job chapel (office branch) agreement, of which there are more than 50. The Times Newspapers demands amounted to an attack on almost every bit of bargain-

ing strength that chapels have won over many years. These demands, listed below, rips up every "house" agreement and is totally unacceptable to the union chapels involved:

1. If any one chapel takes action that stops production all chapels will cease to be paid. A process of divide and rule.
2. Only 24 hours notice will be required to change shifts.
3. Compulsory overtime to maintain production. At present overtime is optional.
4. Management have the absolute right to do any of the jobs. This is a strike breaking clause designed to hit at any type of go slow, or any industrial action short of a strike.
5. Managements to define staffing levels. This means completely unlimited redundancies extending into the indefinite future.
6. No payment for cover for sickness and holidays. This effectively puts an end to paid holidays on sick leave. The workers pay for sick leave and holidays by having to cover.
7. An end to the calls procedure where the print unions have control over the recruitment of skilled labour.
8. Management to determine duties. The "do as you're told" clause.

(See pg 4 of the attached Petition to the Natsopa Clerical Branch to call a special branch meeting to discuss the Times projected closure, which was drawn up by an independent group of workers circulated in the Clerical Branch. This was the basis of a widespread protest in Natsopa against the

(cont, pg 8.)

TOWARDS WORKERS' COUNCILS (II)

In our last bulletin (No.4) I outlined a perspective of workers' councils, but, unfortunately, they are not yet in existence and, it must be stated, no one is positively taking any action to promote them in this country. There is, of course, a mistaken theory that they do not have to be prepared for: it is argued that they will spring up spontaneously when the crisis of capitalism has reached its most acute form. This concept of spontaneity is particularly popular with the so-called revolutionary parties and groups in Britain today as well as in other countries. There is a very good reason why these so-called revolutionary parties and groups do not now advocate this revolutionary concept of workers' councils - they do not want them to come into existence until such time as they can dominate them. They cannot do this until these parties and groups have a membership very widely based in industry and can command the majority support of the working class. This is why some have a policy of nationalisation with or even without workers control, i.e., a state capitalism - a transitional demand they call it.

Intervening This is why most of these parties and groups always talk about "intervening" in the class struggle. Since they are not usually initiated by workers but come from the outside, they seek to ingratiate the workers and win their support for policies which they have worked out on behalf of the working class: naturally in the interests of the working class - so they say! In effect, their policies are elitist and they do not for one moment subscribe to the idea that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself and that it can achieve its aim without its movement being lead by a vanguard of revolutionary intellectuals.

Day To Day Struggle For us, however, every industrial struggle for day to day demands is potentially the starting point for the further development of a deeper and wider movement of the working class out of which the workers' council can and must grow. Failure by us to take part in these day to day struggles, particularly in the industrial sphere would leave us in sectarian isolation from the most militant and decisive sections of the working class.

The day to day struggles usually take place on a reformist basis, to ameliorate the worst features of capitalist exploitation and therefore only have limited short-term objectives. But

even here they are more and more being organised by unofficial committees or independent movements against the wishes of the various trades union bureaucracies.

Such struggles provide valuable experience in methods and techniques of struggle and without this preparedness to engage in such struggles, the working class is not yet ready for a decisive struggle for workers' power. To use a military analogy, they are guerilla skirmishes preliminary to the main battle.

The industrial sphere of activity is thus the primary sphere of activity in which we must take part.

Trades Union Structure Although we do our basic work at the point of production in the factories and workshops, we should not and cannot reject activity and work within the trades union branches where these are based not on a factory or workshop but on a territorial basis, since this type of union branch provides an opportunity for contact with members of the union working in different factories and workshops.

These trades union spheres of activity also provide an opportunity for combatting the general reformist ideology of

(cont. pg 3.)

Towards Workers' Councils, cont:

the trades union bureaucracy allied to the reformist Labour Party and where our policy can be popularised. This activity is, of course, secondary to the primary sphere, i.e., the factory, etc.

Trades Councils Similarly, although the local trades councils comprising delegates from territorial trades union branches do not directly co-ordinate factories, depots, docks, etc., their regular delegate meetings provide valuable liaison between different unions and thus with different industries.

It should be our aim to encourage the development not only of wider contact within a given industry but between industries and services of all kinds. The trades councils are part of the official general machinery of the whole trades union movement affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, but they have had their functions eroded away since the General Strike of 1926, in which they played a major role. Nevertheless, in times of acute industrial struggle they have been a means of local co-ordination in the absence of other co-ordinating machinery of a more advanced nature - the workers' councils. Since the trades union movement generally is unlikely to be organised on an industrial basis within the foreseeable future, it cannot be expected that the structure of the trades councils will change appreciably.

Fighting Union Reformism Whilst not neglecting activity in the officially recognised trades union structure, the shop stewards committees and shop meetings convened by them, in the local union branches, district committees, etc., we must understand that the whole trades union movement is geared to

the reformist policies of the national executives and TUC and that the whole movement has come under the domination of a reformist bureaucracy.

The general policy of the TUC and union executives is based on the assumption that it is in the interests of the working class and its organised trades union movement to assist the capitalist class to increase production, by rationalisation and increased productivity.

Indeed, the whole policy of the TUC and union executives supporting a Labour Party and Labour government is based upon these capitalist assumptions, and its structure is closely linked with government departments such as the Ministry of Employment, employers organisations through conciliation machinery - not only for the "peaceful" settlement of disputes, but with the manifold special institutions set up by the employers and the government (no matter which party is in office), to hold wages in check, increase productivity and in general serve the interests of the capitalist class and state.

Class Collaboration In particular, when Labour governments are in power, these developments have reached their highest peak so far. However, this general tendency to incorporate the structure of the trades unions which have been built up over decades as a result of the militancy and self-sacrifice of the working class into the machinery of the capitalist class and state, is no reason why this mass movement should be surrendered to the capitalist class and union bureaucracy without a struggle. All policies and organisational proposals serving the aim of turning the working class into docile participants in their own exploitation must
(cont. pg 4.)

PEOPLE AND THE PRESS - A handbook for tenants, workers and others who deal with the media, published by the Liverpool Free Press, 100, Whitechapel, Liverpool 1, price 35p. is a most useful guide to how to deal with the press. It includes Notes on the press, how the media is used, seeking publicity, dealing with reporters, press releases, etc.

Towards Workers' Councils, conts:

be combatted in all spheres of the trades union movement.

To look upon the whole trades union movement as one big reactionary mass and refuse to work within it, would cut us off from the mass of the organised workers and keep us in sectarian isolation and without any influence.

Similarly, since it is extremely unlikely that the current structures of the trades union movement, comprising craft and general workers unions, be re-organised on the basis of industrial unions, (at least within the foreseeable future), the building of alternative "revolutionary" industrial unions can be ruled out as a practical proposition. Because unions are based on industrial structures does not, in itself, guarantee their having a "revolutionary" perspective, as experience in other countries has shown.

Independent Struggle The struggle against this anti-democratic concentration of power in the trades union movement must be waged by the rank and file and it is our task to show how this can be done. We must encourage all forms of independent working class struggle and the building of independent rank and file movements in the various industries becomes a very necessary part of this struggle.

Militant rank and file activity, whether it be the Unofficial as well as the Official factory organisation of shop stewards must be supported and developed, not only as vehicles for intensifying the day to day struggles to win concessions from the capitalist class - the militant reform struggle - but to raise the understanding of the participants and show that this limited struggle cannot objectively solve their basic problems. We must therefore agitate and carry out consistent propaganda for workers' ownership and control of industry through workers' councils, among the rank and file.

Objective Aims Without this linking up of the objective demand for workers' ownership and control through workers' councils with the day to day struggle, the day to day struggle is limited to demands for concessions and does not challenge the basic character of capitalism - which would make us also no better than militant reformists.

J. Thomas.

Leaflet:

35 HOUR WEEK

The London Workers Group has produced a very useful leaflet on the 35 hour week, which is available in quantity, Box W, 182, Upper St, London, N.1.

The growing demand for the 35 hour week is the biggest proposed change in the working week for many years. So far the advances in technology have meant only lengthening dole queues and increased intensity and boredom in work.

It points out that the Post Office Engineers have already pointed the way in making the achievement of the 35 hour week a real demand. Even though they did not succeed in their recent struggle to achieve this aim, they did obtain a substantial cut in working hours.

The issue has similarly be raised in the recent struggle at Fords. Even though the settlement in this case did not achieve the 35 hour week, it is still, we understand, a very live issue among Ford workers. In fact our leaflet has been in great demand among Ford workers.

The leaflet is useful in that it gives a brief outline of how the struggle for a shorter working week has ever been a recurrent theme in trade union struggles. It becomes even more necessary now that technology problems face us as never before.

Report:A LOOK AT THE GPO

Well its coming up to Xmas and the whiff of money, because of overtime, always brightens everyone up in the sorting offices. It's also quite a break having temporary staff around (especially when they end up doing most of the work!) But when money is in the air, so is the GPO fist, trying to get the maximum work out of us, for the smallest payout. Consequently there's always rows and threatened walk-outs. In a small office there's not a lot we can do, as the arrangements are usually set nationally, but technicalities arise...A major grievance is the threat to make us work Christmas Eve (Sunday), but it looks like it will be "voluntary" - i.e. those poor buggers who'll do it because they need the money.

Wages Talking of money, the famous Union of Postal Workers (UPW) is aiming to "fight" for an 8 per cent "increase" (i.e. a cut in real terms). This is so pathetic it makes you cry and laugh at the same time. With an attempt to consolidate previous increases into our basic pay (No additional money), the newspapers are already baying about 25 per cent and trying to intimidate us. It remains to be seen if any rumblings of discontent will turn into action for wage rises, but the union control is strong, morale low, cynicism high and alternatives weak! However, desperation is around and once again it is the big offices (W1, NW1, E1, SW1, etc.) who may take action. No one is going to risk an all-out strike, after the 1971 fiasco. A work-to-rule is a far better tactic. Meanwhile, Tom Jackson gets nearer the House of Lords each week.

Corporate State Tom Jackson believes in a corporate state, where employers, government and unions run industry. In the GPO, the first attempts to put the Bullock (participation) proposals into effect, are taking place. Not that the workers have noticed any change, except a glossy GPO hand-out saying that our opinion would be considered in future. Big deal.

My Office Things have livened up a bit, and with support for the Branch Secretary at an all-time low, maybe the chance is there to re-organise and recreate shop-floor meetings and action. The 70 of us are the branch, so its possible to use

the branch as an autonomous decision making body, if only we could break away from the union machinery and bureaucracy. Believe it or not, I intend to stand as secretary (and may easily get it) in order to:

- (a) try and demote the job to one that carries out the instructions of branch meetings as opposed to dominating them. (I'll still be working full-time, less two hours daily.)
- (b) prevent anyone else getting in.
- (c) do myself a favour, at a time when the GPO is harassing me to try and get rid of me.

This last point is entirely immoral and un-anarchist, but there you are! More importantly, its hoped that there will be more, bigger and better meetings and freedom of action and information.

The GPO is worried enough to have given me this incredible written reprimand (a serious step) for not informing them early enough about having some time off (five hours). Never been heard of before, but I dont wish to brag! Needless to say that my appeal was a total whitewash, the system nearly identical to the internal disciplinary code in one of Her Majesty's prisons.

GAYPO The only organised people trying to spread new ideas in the GPO are a group of Gay workers who aim to create significant support for their problems and gay people in general. They have refreshingly open and undogmatic views on politics (if a bit liberal) and organisation (non-hierarchical).
D. Livery.

PROBLEMS OF AN ANCILLIARY WORKER

I work as a gardener in a hotel which started growing around an old farmhouse when a catering corporation and an international airline jointly bought the farmhouse and about 110 acres of farmland around. Their major sources of revenue are management conferences of firms from the industrial estates and new town just down the road and foreign visitors via our local London Airport (you too can enjoy the beautiful English countryside at £27 per night, per person).

The Hotel The hotel building is two stories of mock 18th century brickwork with beams (old railway sleepers) and is built on undrained clay which is moving (the maintenance men are always reshaping doors so that they will open and shut). In the foyer the splitting beams are tastefully held up with mining roof jacks. They never stop building extensions for more bedrooms and are at the moment engaged in a project to build a road (pass staff bedrooms) and squash courts in one of the fields.

Garden Staff My position in this glorious enterprise is as one of three gardeners, who look after the six acres of formal garden, a half acre of pond, with swans and ducks. These along with five freedom loving and often hungry cats make up the total animal population. My two workmates are Second World War veterans who consider themselves Powellites (and vote Labour because Maggie's a woman). They believe, as most moral people do, that everything is getting too big and lacks the personal touch. As such, they identify with the work (doing a 'good job') rather than with the employer, of whom, beyond the resident manager (who is German) they see few and far between. Their relations with the two black workers, one Indian and various Turks, Spanish and Italians are based on national pride (which they expect everyone else to have) and respect for skills at work, while at the same time believing they shouldn't be here when "There's no enough jobs for the British" - an argument easily taken to pieces economically (no investment - no jobs - no money for us to buy these luxuries - no returns - no investment, etc.) But that doesn't change their basic

prejudice (they just stop making excuses for it) and the idea that everyone should live where they want to is totally alien (except for the British). I've been working here since April after being unemployed for a year (and I've spent a great deal of time simply enjoying the freedom of a little more money. I intend to leave in a fortnight (if I can get cheap enough accommodation to go to an horticultural college.

Catering Workers I don't have a lot of contact with the catering workers as they tend to eat in the kitchens when they are working. Though I gave one apprentice chef a copy of the last bulletin, but in the end he said he was afraid to do anything that would get him the sack. To be honest the conditions aren't bad as far as hotels go. A kitchen porter gets about £30 per week net. If you are living in there is no outlay for food, rent, rates, etc. Few, if any, of the kitchen staff live out. Some of the hall porters do and their rates are about the same - which is an efficient way of dividing the workforce.

Attitude to Work I feel, on a personal level I have managed to get my fellow gardeners to approach work more casually and have extended our tea breaks from ten minutes to one hour simply by not making any attempt to go back to work. We actually work 5 hours 55 mins in a nine hour day (which is one reason why my workmates don't want to rock the boat). I hope no agent of capitalism reading this can recognise it). These benefits say more about the nature of gardening than our militancy.

J.G.

Comment:PICKETING

The rights of workers who are picketing should be made clear and should be the same no matter who is striking or where the strike is taking place. At the present time it appears that the number of pickets depends on the mood of the local cops.

Opinion:What is a Worker?

More than once during the direct action conference held in London this November, the old problem of the term "worker" was raised. A lot of people seem to think that by calling ourselves "workers", London Workers' Group, are seeking to exclude certain categories of people, i.e., by "worker" we are supposed to mean only those (mostly men) who are employed in heavy industry, belong to a trade union and/or work with many others on a "shop floor" where the boss-worker relationship is clearly defined.

This supposition, however, is not true. For a start, many who come to LWG meetings are unemployed and are therefore not technically "workers". Though we have not (yet) entered into a debate about the role of worker/non-worker in the revolutionary struggle, the group is about what we do in our daily lives as well as about other people's struggles around what they do together, e.g. strikes, union recognition, etc.

So, for someone to prevent themselves from coming to LWG meetings because they think they're not included because they're a housewife or a poet, rest assured they are excluding themselves and making their own definition of what a "worker" is.

We come together as workers because we are oppressed as workers. Some of us may choose to be workers as others choose to be non-workers, but we do not choose to be oppressed. The revolution will be/is waged on a myriad of fronts, in the streets, homes, in places of leisure/culture and places where you get paid for doing what someone tells you. The scope of London Workers is necessarily limited to just some of these places.
- Stepneyhack.

Pickets Limited If they are feeling generous then there might be quite a decent picket but what is usually the case is that the numbers allowed are too few and the picket is left ineffective. This is especially true in the case of a strike where only a few workers are involved. The police, realising that the strike is weak, helps the bosses by reducing the numbers of pickets.

Garner Dispute An example of the way in which the local law helps to destroy the picket line is the Garner Steakhouse dispute, where 84 workers were sacked for joining a union. The strikers are only allowed six pickets for each restaurant and if that were not enough they are harassed even further by police. At one of the steak houses a copper stood on one side of the entrance and when requested to move so that a picket (one of only four pickets) could stand beside the door so as to peacefully picket. He said "grunt" "grunt" "I am not moving for the likes of your sort, you can stand on the other side of the pavement" thereby reducing the effectiveness of the workers.

Where pickets have been strong at Garners the restaurant has stayed empty but where it is weak, the restaurant is full, thereby proving the value of strong picketing. It is one of the principle weapons of workers involved in a dispute and it is important that workers everywhere united to stop the right of pickets being eroded.

Our Help Needed There is to be an all out picket of all 16 branches of Garners on December 8, from 12-3 and 5.30 to 11 pm. This aim is to stop all Garners' business for one day. They need as much help as we can give. Even if its only for a couple of hours. - T.W.

Times Newspapers Lockout: cont:

failure of the tradeunion leadership to prepare for the struggle at The Times.

Staff Cuts But the compositors are not the only ones who will lose their jobs if Times Newspapers get their way. They are hell bent on reducing staff in practically all crafts and in all departments. The total cut is estimated at around 1,000 out of 4,000 workers, not only in areas where the new technology is being introduced but in areas where it is not. Natsopa, the general workers Union, having 2,200 out of the 4,000, would also face massive cuts, particularly in the machine room where casuals are employed on the Sunday Times on Saturdays. Attempts have been made by Natsopa to regularise casual working since 1953 but has met with constant refusals by NPA newspapers. Even in the area of clerical workers cuts have been demanded. Thus the aim of Times Newspapers - a minor part of the vast Thomson Scottish Associates and Thomson family, now the International Thomson Organisation, is to effect massive redundancies alongside the introduction of the new technology.

No Strategy As the Petition points out, neither Natsopa nor the other print unions have had a long-term strategy to deal with the new technology despite the fact that the new process have been known for a number of years. Even this new technology is likely to be further advanced when the full impact of micro-chips is introduced in the new generation of equipment. One can say that the national officials weakened the whole struggle last year when they produced a so-called "Programme for Action" which was tantamount to the full acceptance of the new technology. At the time this "programme" of retreat and defeat was overwhelmingly turned down. But in practice, what the Times Newspapers is doing is to take the union leaders at their word and operate it. It is not as if they did not know what the impact would be. In the US, in Germany, etc., the new technology is already in operation. In the US, the unions were very badly defeated by the employers and printers suffered massive redundancies. In

Germany on many newspapers, the unions were able to salvage a great deal of jobs that could have disappeared. But the technology is there and the re-trained compositors are now working alongside less skilled labour operating the New VDU's without losing their previous rates of pay. When they finally retire, the new VDU operators will be on the rates relating to their current jobs, ie. journalists rates.

If and when the new technology is completed in the sphere of composition and other related processes, the number of workers in print will be sharply cut. In Britain as a whole, extending over the whole industry, there are various estimates of the number of jobs which will be lost. Of some 380,000 workers, it is expected this number will drop to 250,000.

Rationalisation What is happening to the print industry today has and is happening in all other industries. Many have already gone through a process of rationalisation at a much earlier period: railways, mines, shipyards and so on. For the nationalisation plans was rationalisation - that is its primary purpose.

One would think that in this situation even the reformist trade union leaders would at least make a massive attack on the long hours of work in industry. But until the rank and file themselves initiate such a campaign, they will not move. We have the recent example of the Ford settlement, where the demand for the 35 hour week was thrown away in the negotiations. And no one can say that rationalisation has not hit and continues to hit the motor car industry. This is the minimum that can be demanded under a capitalist system, plus earlier retirements on adequate pensions - not what is being offered at the present time. But beyond this, with the context of a continued capitalist system, with which the reformist leaders are bound up, there is no final solution to the whole problem. Mass redundancies, massive unemployment is the order of the day. There is no basic solution under a profit making capitalist system.

Nathaniel Soper.

DIRECT ACTION: ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST CONFERENCE, 11-12 November 1978

PRESENT: People from London Workers, Sheffield Clinkers Union, Newcastle, Reading Anarchists, Wisbech, Richmond, Stoke, Manchester Syndicalist Workers Federation (and others).

These following are minutes, notes of discussions and a general account of the Conference. The agenda was proposed at a party on Friday night by 6 or 7 people, and was largely kept to, except for an important theoretical debate about forms of organisation (syndicalism, workers councils, etc.), which was abandoned on Sunday afternoon in favour of practical things. No doubt that debate must crop up in the future. About 45 people took part, but no more than 25 at any one time.

This account may sound sketchy and jump from one thing to another, but its the best way to record the discussion.

SATURDAY MORNING

Chairperson chosen, but after an hour faded out of use.

General activities, events and ideas: What is Direct Action?

- Workers in a Burnley home for mentally subnormal people occupied it rather than strike. Later a comrade active there was sacked.
- Reading anarchists helped a gardener employed by Social Services to distribute leaflet attacking the social work department as a 'coloniser amongst the working classes'. Caused a big stir.
- Manchester libertarian '68 Club has sadly collapsed. Manchester SWF have formed a Direct Action group & are aiding Greek comrades here to publicise the incredible repression against the Greek anarchist movement.
- Someone started a graffiti campaign in work toilets, now widely accepted as main written communication in the place. Walls covered with angry comments plus personal insults, sexual fantasy etc. Mary Quant eye-pencil recommended for graffiti - smudges when removed.
- Burnley anarchists printed beer mats; very effective.
- A comrade working at Trust House Forte place said all workers stole to add to low wages. Can be good, or an excuse for tolerating shitty wages. Like tips.
- Suggested that magazines, leaflets to be left in laundrettes, doctors waiting rooms etc.

People found it difficult to put anarchist beliefs into action at work, with a contradiction between that and, say evenings and weekends - meetings etc. Direct Action is Do-it-Yourself politics. Is the D.A. movement a syndicalist Union? We should support the wealth of unofficial resistance going on but not hide our ideas. The Anarchist Press should do much more to publicise work struggles and unofficial activity.

We have to break down our inhibitions against authority and property, get involved in creative vandalism, resist orders of governors or police. But at demos, its easy to become isolated activists. Lewisham anti-fascist, anti-police demo was superb - took over the streets. We shall try and choose our ground and our terms for such struggle. A group can refuse to pay expensive busfares - create a situation and discussion (self-reduction idea can be applied to rent etc.) Grunwicks mailbags sent by postal workers to New Zealand! Sit-ins useful for local centres etc.

Are pickets any good? Depends. Sometimes enemy is stronger and will defeat whatever tactic we use. Need to organise and spread solidarity.

N.B. London Workers Group will produce agitational stickers for workplaces.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

International Comment - Europe

Resurgence of independent workers' movements and anarcho-syndicalism in Europe. International Workers Association, northern Conference called for Feb 17/18 1979 in Copenhagen. Contact ASO, Anarchistic-Syndicalistic Bografe, Studiestraede 18, Copenhagen, Denmark 1455. Tel: (0.) 13 04 23.

members: SWF (British section), Norwegian Syndicalist Federation, FAU of Germany, SAC (Sweden) - IAA group, ASO plus Dutch OV3, CNT (Spain).

Swedish SAC is an old reformist Syndicalist Union with 20,000 members and an active anarchist section.

- We need to develop contacts abroad, especially Northern Europe where same problems arise. Comrade attempted to collect contacts in GPO all over world, but unable to develop a strategy to cope with communication difficulties and distribution of news.
- Comrade told of Mexican prisoners' hunger strike - people in London will support pickets.
- Petrol Station workers on strike all over Spain - 90% CNT members & supporters. Other 10% are socialist UGT and communist CCOO members and are scabbing with aid of police. TUC funds these strikebreakers. CNT has 500,000 members. Trotskyists and reformists are trying to penetrate & dominate CNT. These parasites will be resisted. Much debate at the moment. Also CNT is trying to set up permanent Summer beach camp for travellers.

Black Flag London has initiated a campaign, now enormous (!) for decent pensions for Spanish civil war pensioners and widows (What about widowers? typist's note)

Internationalism in practice means solidarity, most effective at present around prisoners.

Technology

Paper presented and discussion followed (paper to be printed in next issue of Anarchy magazine). Extra comments - technocratic class could and may try to reduce world population, needing less producers. Technology should be sabotaged and destroyed.

Unrecognized Labour, especially women, especially in the Home

It was said that workers have little spontaneity left, reacting only in fear. Women retain a lot of initiative. Maybe this is because of the affinity groups of women, like last centuries workshops (the base of much of the anarchist movement then). Women can't withdraw their labour, so have to take action outside the home - prominent in rent strikes, SS battles etc.

How do we relate to homeworkers? Often we get drawn into the lefty-type attachment to huge industrial struggles & organising, alienating other people, ignoring the smaller, less spectacular but numerous activities. What about Wages for Housework? Housework is slavery, unpaid or paid (institutionalised). Suggested that the word 'worker' be dropped. We are against work. Workers are the vast majority of the population, 80-90% - those who live by their labour.

Are Police workers? Army? 'Got no time for the fuckers'. They side with the enemy. One comrade became an anarchist while in the army.

Revolutionary Action

Reform versus revolution. Even workers councils in past uprisings have had reformist demands. Often uprisings start with such demands, but must not be an end in themselves, but practice, flexing of muscles. Is this defeatist? Have we had ANY reforms in this country or just the reorganising by Rulers to keep control?

Discussion of London Workers' '25 hour week' leaflet. Criticism of its reformism. In non (or pre-) revolutionary times, revolutionary organisation can only grow by such demands. Is this desirable? Better to clarify ideas and situations. Affinity groups can get involved in activity - illegal/fun/situations wetc. But London Workers' leaflet was advocating that workers control their struggles against capitalism, reformist or not. Blueprints are unnecessary. Capitalists don't have blueprints, they consolidate power through learning from experience. A dilemma is how, in a system running wild, we set the ball rolling in the right direction. This is not a question of pulling elusive solutions out of the air like Hamlet - remember they all die in the last scene!

Some people suggested that the system's contradictions will bring it down for us, saying our task is to accelerate this by encouraging street violence, the breaking down of legalistic consciousness of fear. Criminal activities, shop-lifting groups. SWF and LW (London Workers) are 'same as the left'. However, illegal activity is usually reformist - the point is to break down inhibitions, to encourage mass resistance. This is the essence of the reformist/revolutionary contradiction.

Pointed out that there is a ~~next~~ one-day French general strike and march on parliament this month. Probably highly manipulated. Also, spontaneous actions by workers not always good -- can be nationalist, anti-strike or counter-revolutionary.

SUNDAY

Morning

The Direct Action Movement

London Workers' activity - leaflets and bulletins. Should be followed up, small numbers amongst specific people to get feedback. Then a public meeting. But leaflets should be subversive on their own. Fare-fight campaign issued 20,000 leaflets on one day, with only one reply! But Burnley anarchists did large anti-election campaign whilst involving themselves in tenants groups - this consolidated their ideas. We must organise around our ideas and be open to people. Broadsheets so far produced for Direct Action Movement have been about catering workers, health and safety and a general agitational one. A loose movement, but necessary for sharing literature etc., especially for isolated people. A national secretary needed to co-ordinate contacts? Rejected in favour of publicising all local contacts. All future leaflets to be printed without an address, and people can overprint with rubber stamps - AGREED.

London Workers will do next broadsheet - AGREED

Next Conference will be in Manchester in March or April 1979 - AGREED

London Workers explained the reason they were locally based & non-dogmatic was that they wished to relate revolutionary ideas to people threatened by National Organisations & Political doctrines. Even though carrying general stuff, their bulletin is in the main restricted to London and is free (that's important). A national bulletin or paper could aid local activity and Manchester SWF will produce a Direct Action paper for the movement - they wish it to be the child of the movement, not just their group. The London Workers Bulletin is sent to the same people and more each time in order to create an increasing base for libertarian ideas and activity. While local sheets are vital, a well-made national paper would be an asset, but we must be careful not to spend most of our time in producing literature - that's NOT direct action. Our aim must be to strengthen local activity & groups. Distributing a national paper is often very hard work - people must be determined to write and sell it. Many people are shy about selling papers, but money is needed.

There are other currents of ideas amongst us as well as anarchosyndicalism. Are we appealing only to industrial workers? Is this an out-dated idea? The other fields of work and struggle are usually paid only lip-service to. Are we too caught up with reformist Union ideas? All workers are involved in production in one way or another. It was added that the fundamental ideas and strategies of anarcho-syndicalism apply to all areas of life - Claimants Unions, Homeworkers, School Kids, tenants' groups etc.

AFTERNOON - General Discussion

In future there should be a faros pool for those who have a long way to come - AGREED. General financing of conferences (including entrance fees etc.) to be decided by future organisers.

Discussion, as on Saturday afternoon, about non-industrial workers - clerks, homeworkers (usually women), prisoners, claimants, pensioners, kids etc. Industrial workers usually join unions - others have to self-organise. Our task is to aid this sort of self-organisation. As far as industrial activity is concerned, we can influence demonstrations & pickets and we should have a strategy for situations and intervenc. We can also organise ourselves to be more effective. Non-hierarchical rank & filism in industry and outside is useful. There are tons of instinctive anarchistic ideas around, but people are manipulated and afraid - we have to defend and promote the ideas of autonomy, because we have principles, are militants and have a responsibility to influence the world. This means organising & collective responsibility. We should believe in our power and by acting, spread our ideas. If we become isolated, we may be overcome by other ideas & groups.

Unions - useful as a platform for ideas, but positions of power corrupt. Rank & File groups can have great influence, (e.g. Ford Workers (UK)). Unions are now imposing CUTS on workers & not even defending victimised recruits (Garners). In the US, numbers of Union members are falling. Employers may stop up attacks.

London Workers tried to start, with ETU stewards, a campaign against the political levy - didn't really get off the ground although 5,000 Firemen withdrew theirs at the time. A Spanish worker present said that Unions here were unpolitical. In Spain they are linked to Parties, or are Anarchist. So workers debate many issues, although often unaware of ecological and feminist movements.

London Workers discussed Garners 10 month old strike. Been involved on & off since the beginning. Few strikers left, but very determined to picket customers as a boycott. Police very heavy & enforcing a '6 maximum' picket. 20 - 30 pickets already arrested. The Left is not interested except one party, the Workers Socialist League (Wosols) who are building their party around such strikes. Union doing fuck-all. This strike is all hard work and has gone on too long. Workers have to use more imaginative means of struggle, but need more support. LW's present feeling is to give support as long as the strikers request it.

UPW wage deal for '79 will mean about 8% rise (cut). Why do people still wait for the Union miracle. People get used to exploitation.....in the early days workers saw Capitalism coming and tried to smash it immediately - Luddites, etc. - but now it's 'normal'

The Dole. 'I'm sick of it - been on it for fucking months & never have any money'. Others agreed but enjoyed not working. Another was fed-up with not having a job - felt isolated. Suggested that a group of friends could rotate among them who was to be on the dole. Training courses were meaningless in the long term. Often it's our attitude when not working which makes it worse. Those doing political activity should be paid by their comrades. There's going to be millions unemployed in the 80's so we should prepare. a) we should fight it. b) we shouldn't have a slave/guilt etc. mentality about not working. c) we should set up enterprises, especially bookshops, cafes etc. as meeting places.

And on that note, we ended! Minutes by Dave, London Workers Group, and as impartial as any anarchist could be!

INTRODUCTION

WE ARE under attack. Employers are showing a new confidence in demanding reductions in the number of jobs in our industry. We are facing technological changes that will turn our ways of working upside down. If we are not absolutely clear in our understanding of what is happening to us, the employers will be able to take away from us whatever little gains we have won through trade union organisation over the years.

Our response to this offensive from the employers has been fragmented and weak. We have no co-ordinated policy. The sum total of education for chapel officers on New Technology has been two weekend schools at Rottingdean. And most of the speakers there were employer representatives.

If the employers are not to walk all over our chapels we need leadership, guidance, education and a united policy.

That's why we are calling for a special branch meeting to discuss this. That's why we are putting forward our own proposals for discussion.

We have laid out our proposals at some length and we feel that there is a crying need for a constructive alternative, openly discussed.

*N.B.
This is the analysis
of the crisis facing
the printworkers
at the Sunday Times
and the Times,
and has been got
out by an
autonomous group
of Natsopa members,
referred to in the
text of the bulletin.*

NEW TECHNOLOGY—OR OLD FASHIONED SLAVERY?

A GREAT DEAL of the current employers' offensive is hidden behind a smokescreen of 'New Technology'. Often the key element in the deals that are being done has nothing to do with new machinery. Nonetheless we need to understand what the new technology is.

'New Technology' is a blanket term used to refer to techniques that either reduce the number of workers to do a certain job, or reduce the level of skill needed to do it, or enable one worker to perform functions previously performed by several.

There exist new techniques in almost every area of newspaper production and news distribution.

The techniques which affect us most as clerical workers are those involving computerisation of typing and accounting. These techniques involve ensuring that once a piece of information has been typed, it is never retyped. It is stored in a machine and can be looked at, altered and edited, usually by the use of a visual display unit. This is a device with a typewriter-like keyboard and a television screen on which the typed text is displayed. Using such devices it is possible, for instance, for a journalist to sub-edit a story that has been entered into the machine. When the story is ready it can then be automatically set into type. There is no need for the journalist to sub-edit the story on a piece of paper. There is no need for an NGA member to read the sub-edited copy and retype it on a typesetting machine.

Similar techniques can even affect secretarial jobs. Word processing systems can eliminate the retyping of drafts of letters, and allow the assembly of letters and other documents from phrases and paragraphs stored in the computer memory. Of course, a system that makes the correction of errors easy and undetectable in the final product raises the possibility of eliminating typists in some areas, with unskilled staff doing their own typing.

We would be blind not to realise that it is not only to the traditional areas of newspaper production that the new technology poses a threat. In many cases the employers will not take up the full possibilities for redundancies when equipment is first installed, in order to gain acceptance for it. Once the equipment is in, it is possible to use divide-and-rule tactics to achieve the reductions in jobs later.

Almost all areas of work performed by clerical workers in the printing industry are liable to the same sort of computerisation that has been introduced in clerical jobs outside.

Not all of these techniques are going to come at once. The employers, however, are making their preparations. Accounts clerks, tele-ad people, library clerks, messengers, typists—no-one is immune from attack.

It isn't that the employers are buying machines that will replace us—far from it.

Take the case of a word processor: the typist's basic skills are still required, but now one key depression can do the work of two before. There are no delays while the typist puts paper in the typewriter and lines it up, and no pauses to rub out errors. The little breaks that make the working day bearable are eliminated. To produce a letter the typist

has to exert as much mental effort as before. The typist produces twice as many letters in a day because the machine has made it possible for the typist to work twice as hard.

The same goes for many other variants of this 'New Technology'. There is a resemblance to that older piece of 'New Technology'—the production line. By bringing the work more quickly to and from the worker, the machine makes the worker work harder.

Microfilm and information retrieval systems will have a similar impact in libraries, intensifying the speed of work. In the accounts department one clerk will be performing the functions of several: processing orders, credit control and invoicing in a single operation.

Another important aspect of these new machines is the control that they give to the employer. Measurements are taken undetectably within the machines to see who is doing how much work and when. The employers may deny that this information exists, and never use it openly against individuals, but they can still use it to re-organise the work, keep the pressure up and minimise the number of jobs. For instance, automatic call queuing equipment for tele-ads can also be used to monitor response times for individual workers.

The basic ideas behind these new techniques are as old as the stopwatch and the production line. Clerical staff have somehow come to think over the years that these things were not for them.

Now, some of us even clock in (under the guise of flexitime) and the other methods of the factory floor are not far behind.

The employers are now becoming so confident that in many areas they are not bothering to conceal their speed-up intentions behind new machinery. They simply offer a small carrot and a big stick to make us all work harder for declining real wages.

There has been a certain complacency among clerical workers about the coming attacks. The feeling is that other sections, the NGA, the Natsopa machine may lose jobs, but that we'll be alright.

The talk about the NGA pinching our jobs is not really accurate. By and large the NGA are allowing their jobs to vanish and then our members are or will be carrying out part of the NGA function. The cause of the problems that arise is not the greed of the NGA for our jobs. Why they should want our miserable low paid jobs is a mystery. The problem arises because the jobs were lost in the first place.

Once the jobs have been allowed to go, it's almost inevitable that squabbles will break out over what's left. The employers can then play one off against another. We can only lose from this.

The only way out of this vicious circle is to ensure that no jobs are lost. Every chapel, every union should pledge not to take the jobs of other chapels (as the NUJ have done, in theory, if not in practice).

We should recognise that although the strongest attacks may be made initially on other sections, if the employers manage to beat them, we will be the next in line.

In the face of all this there are still houses without even a committee of all the Natsopa chapels, let alone a committee from all the unions.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

THE EMPLOYERS have provoked a series of disputes with the print unions in Fleet Street over the last year or so. The workers have been defeated almost every time. The common characteristic of all these disputes has been that one section of workers has been picked on by the employers and left to fight alone. The workers under attack have been so narrow minded and elitist that they wouldn't even ask for support from other chapels. They thought that they could fight on their own and they were beaten. Although these disputes have not yet hit clerical workers directly, they should serve as a warning to us.

The deal at the Daily Mirror and the lock out at the Times give good examples of the dangers and pitfalls that we face as clerical workers.

The Mirror deal produced for our members wage levels which are good relative to many other Fleet Street chapels. The price that has been paid by the chapel is a heavy one, and there is much worse to come. The Mirror deal envisaged a job loss of over 100 in a chapel of 600. At the time that the deal was being voted on, the members were being assured that this job loss wouldn't really happen. Already over 50 jobs have gone. Now chapel members are starting to feel the sting in the tail. You can now only hope to apply successfully for an internal vacancy at the Mirror if you won't be replaced when you leave your current job. The management have put a block on hiring new staff. In department after department, the pressure of work is building up and our members now have no protection. The management can rely on union full time officers to police the agreement and prevent the chapel from defending the members against its effects.

The rates at the Mirror look good now. It's unlikely that they will look so good after a few years of erosion by inflation; with the chapel deprived of the right to defend itself by this four year agreement.

One of the first productivity deals, described as such, done in this country was at the ESSO Fawley refinery in 1960. As a result of that deal, the wages at Fawley were amongst the highest in the country. But in evidence to the Donovan commission some six years later it emerged that by then it had become one of the lowest paid in Britain. In the long run the workers paid dearly for the loss of control over wages and work practices. This loss of control is a characteristic of productivity deals.

At the Times we see the introduction of tactics and techniques that might up to now have been regarded as 'American'. In America the introduction of new technology has on one or two papers been achieved by simply shutting down the old operation and opening a new plant staffed with non-union labour somewhere out of town. The print unions have been left locked out and picketing an empty building.

At the Times, the management have decided to hold a lockout until they can force their workers to crawl back to work on the draconian terms that they intend to dictate. Interestingly, they are in breach of the existing disputes procedure that they are always trying to force upon us.

Showing the traditional concern of

employer for employee, they have decided to hold the lockout over the Christmas period, when they calculate that the workforce may be more vulnerable.

The terms of the lockout are calculated to divide the workforce: chapels that capitulate before the lockout will continue to be paid (for a while only, if you read the small print). The management objective is to make this divide and rule tactic a permanent feature of life at the Times.

The grim list of demands by the Times management include attacks on almost every conceivable bit of bargaining strength chapels have won over the years.

1. If any one chapel takes action that stops production, all chapels will cease to be paid. This is the divide and rule clause.
2. Only 24 hours notice will be required for changes in shift arrangements.
3. Compulsory overtime to maintain production.
4. Management have the absolute right to do any of our jobs. This is an institutionalised strike breaking clause designed to hit at any type of go slow, or any industrial action short of a strike.
5. Management to define staffing levels. This effectively means completely unlimited redundancies extending into the indefinite future.
6. No payment for cover for sickness and holidays. This is effectively the end for paid holidays or sick leave. We pay for sick leave and holidays ourselves by having to work harder when our colleagues are away.
7. An end to a calls procedure where we have any control over the giving of a free hand, and an absolute right to use agency temps. This is an attempt to prevent even market pressures of staff shortage from pushing clerical wages up.
8. Management to determine duties. The 'do as you're told' clause. This means that no longer will the chapels be able to negotiate improvements in wages and conditions as working practices change.

If the management at the Times can show that it's possible to win even a few of their objectives, then every management in Fleet Street will be in the queue saying 'me too'. If our colleagues at the Times are beaten — we are all in for a very rough time.



WHAT ARE THE EMPLOYERS AFTER?

If you talk to executives of Media General, the Richmond, Virginia newspaper group that publishes a local morning and a local evening paper and a financial daily, and has had a seminal influence on the introduction of new technology in the US, they produce dramatic figures for the financial savings from photocomposition and its associated equipment. Previously they had 185 skilled printers working in their composing room, earning about 200 dollars a week in 1971 and (if they were still there) perhaps 230-240 now (1975). However the figure is now down to 140, and it is an entirely different group of people, non-union, originally unskilled and now trained, if at all, on the job, earning 125 dollars a week. The savings from the change were 800,000 dollars in the first year alone, and are now running at 1,250,000 dollars a year. The cost of the equipment was 900,000 dollars. Evidence to the Royal Commission on the Press

IF WE ask why it is the employers want the new technology, the short answer is money, as the above quotation shows. That simple answer isn't the whole story. The American experience shows that not all the money saving comes from the extra efficiency of the 'New Techniques'. In many respects the new techniques are less efficient. Certainly it is at present true that it takes longer to get news into a newspaper with new technology than with the old. It is also true that the quality of paper produced with the new technology is often worse. Some American papers still use the old techniques for the late news pages because they are faster.

The truth is that the new technology was used in the US as a weapon to break the strength of the unions.

The new techniques allow the elimination of the old skills and the destruction of old boundaries. It is far easier to bring out a strike breaking paper with the new technology than with the old. When different unions are competing for the same jobs, it is all too easy for the employers to play one off against the other. A quick glance at the 'Programme for Action' shows just how much the Fleet Street employers have the attack on union strength in mind.

This disgraceful document revolved around the destruction of the basic power of the unions in Fleet Street.

The cornerstone of the 'Programme for Action' was the setting up of 'Joint House Committees' to unify all negotiations in any house.

These committees would not have included representatives of all the chapels. The chapels of each union would only have had one representative between them. The other representative of each union would have been a union nominee, i.e. a union official. This would have meant the permanent involvement of fulltime officials and the exclusion of many chapels even from house negotiations.

To add insult to injury, the disputes procedure was to have been operated by a new committee between unions and management. If the dispute concerned, say, members of Natsopa, the Natsopa representative would have withdrawn from the

meeting, leaving the other unions to decide the case.

In addition, the 'Programme for Action' gave the green light to massive redundancies, though just as in the proposals at the Times, the management did not put figures down on paper for the members to vote on.

The employers aimed, and continue to aim, to establish a situation in which redundancies can't be resisted, and then they will start to push for the exact number that they have wanted all along.

Under the Joint House Committee system, we would have had to work under whatever intolerable conditions the employers chose to impose for months, even years. By the time the final 'No' had been said the members would have long since lost the will to do anything about it.

Well, the 'Programme for Action' was decisively rejected by the members, and quite rightly so. It's dead — but it won't lie down.

In every dispute that the employers have provoked in the last couple of years, the 'Programme for Action' has been hanging over us like a bad smell.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the employers are now attempting to do piecemeal what they failed to do in one go with the 'Programme for Action'.

They want speed-up, intensification of work, redundancies, even in areas unaffected by new technology, and the elimination of strong trade union organisation.

The employers' aim is to eliminate the chapel from the industrial scene. The chapel is responsive to the members' wishes, it is on the ground, and it acts quickly to get what the members want. The employers want a cumbersome and lengthy procedure that takes all disputes not only out of the hands of the members concerned, but even out of the hands of the union concerned.

Look now at what the Times management are demanding. They want, basically, a guarantee that the unions will cease to defend their members' interests. They want to involve fulltime officials in every negotiation.

Isn't that strongly reminiscent of the 'Programme for Action'?

The methods by which the objectives are sought is different: The Times proposals seek to eliminate chapel negotiations by setting up an overall wages structure, by having a three year agreement and by explicitly eliminating all those things on which chapels have traditionally bargained, such as holiday arrangements, changes in shifts, new machinery, overtime arrangements.

The result is the same: control in the hands of the management, and no power left to the chapels to defend themselves for the future.

The 'Programme for Action', though signed by union officers, contained many of the ideas for the offensive that the employers are now launching against us. It is against these ideas that we now have to fight.

THE EMPLOYERS OFFENSIVE — OUR REPLY

'If the chapels ... did seek to maximise their members' earnings by agreeing to reduce the number of jobs, then they were not nearly as successful as the chapels ... which did not.'

Industrial Relations in Fleet Street, page 111. The book is by Keith Sisson, who ought to know — he was Labour Secretary of the Newspaper Publishers Association from 1968-1970!

AS THAT quotation shows, anyone who thinks that they can do the membership a good turn by getting wage rises supposedly in exchange for redundancies is sadly misled.

If we concede what the employers are after, however attractive the money offered, we are giving away our ability to defend our wages and conditions in the future. In any event the money on offer will be very little.

We need not expect any other chapel to be offered as much money even as the Mirror chapel. The employers think that they have us on the run, and they're not giving anything away.

The choice that faces us is not the choice between a chapel of 100 members on £50 a week and 50 members on £100 a week. If the jobs are sold, we will find in a short while that the escalator of inflation has taken us back to where we started; 50 jobs on £100 a week that is only worth £50.

What, then is the alternative?

We need to know *what* we want, *how* we can get it, and we need to have some long term objectives.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

1. No job loss.

We must lose no jobs whether by redundancy or natural wastage. What right have we got to throw young people onto the ever growing dole queue because we gave away the jobs that they might have had?

2. Protect Health and Safety

We have no right to jeopardise the health of our fellow workers. We must ensure:

(a) No-one to sit for more than 40 mins in front of a VDU without a 20 minute break.

(b) No more than 4 hours a day in front of a VDU.

(c) Regular eyesight checks with assurance of absolute guarantee of earnings for those whose eyesight is poor.

(d) Measurements of all types of radiation and all technical information to be made readily available.

(e) All changes in workload, machinery, manning and work methods to be the subject of negotiation before any changes are implemented.

This is the single most important item. Stress is the highest health hazard faced by clerical workers and stress causes many of the illnesses that kill and cripple clerical workers — ulcers, heart attacks, nervous breakdowns. Overwork is a threat to our health, and undermining causes overwork.

3. Shorter working week, increased holidays, increased pay.

The employers tell us of the benefits that will come from new technology. But it's always 'Jam Tomorrow'. We want our jam today.

4. Complete end to regular overtime working, with compensation to pay for loss of regular overtime.

We should force employers to staff up and provide proper coverage for sickness and holidays. As things are, it's a joke to say that we get paid holidays. The holidays are paid — we pay for

them ourselves either by covering for nothing (at worst) or by working overtime (at best) which come far cheaper to the employer than proper staffing levels.

5. Elimination of temporaries

Temps are a way in which the employers avoid their responsibilities to employees and weaken their chapels' negotiating position. We should force employers to staff up to the proper levels.

6. Training

All existing staff to be retrained to use new equipment. A training programme to bring young people into the industry, with agreed levels of recruitment on the basis of a ratio to the number of permanent staff, i.e. one young person in training to every ten adult employees.

7. Phased retirement

The employers have always cynically used 'early retirement' as a way of getting rid of jobs on the cheap. We should be saying that our members, worn out by years of work for the employers, should be given the dignity of a period of reducing hours and increasing holidays on full pay in the years approaching retirement. We should, of course, insist on full cover for their absence.

HOW DO WE GET IT?

If all we do is react to proposals that the employers put forward to us, we will lose, time and time again. The employers are well informed, and have an agreed and understood strategy. Our members are ill informed and no attempt has been made to create a strategy.

We need to do the following:

1. Protect Chapel Organisation

For 1 and foremost, we must never give up our right to defend ourselves. Complicated and restrictive 'disputes procedures' give the employers a free hand to 'interpret' agreements exactly as they choose. Power to negotiate must stay in the hands of the chapels.

2. Control

We must have full control over any new machinery. We need the ability and the right in any agreement to renegotiate staffing levels if work load, pagination etc change. We need to maintain our demarcation and ensure that we neither give work away nor steal it from anyone else. We also need to protect demarcation between departments and jobs within our own chapels. 'Flexibility' is only one step away from redundancy.

3. Leadership

Chapels must not be left to face the employers on their own.

We need the opposite of what is often the case nowadays: 'chapel autonomy' is cited as a reason for accepting defeat, but never as a reason for taking action.

We need leadership from the front, by example. In practice this means education, discussion, policy and action. We need training schools for our members without employers speaking to train them to cope with the employers' offensive.

We need discussion: more special delegate meetings to follow the development of this crucial situation, work out the lessons and lay down policy guidelines for the chapels. We need discussion in the chapels to ensure that all our members are informed and involved. We should set up an elected committee to draw up a set of guidelines following the policies laid out in this document and present proposals to the branch.

We need action. We need to be prepared to back up individual chapels. It is clear that more often than not the employers will be taking industrial action against us. We should be prepared to find every possible way of financially supporting chapels under attack by the raising of levies, and of supporting chapels by industrial action. The employers have a massive lockout fund which they

use to support each other. If we let them take on our chapel, one at a time, we shall surely be beaten. All the employers who support attacks on our members should face industrial action together.

4. Unity

The members of other unions are not our enemies. The employers would like to set us at each others' throats. We should unite with our fellow workers in co-ordinated action through federated house chapels and joint negotiations. That doesn't mean that we should give up any demarcation. Far from it. Demarcation brings benefits in control and job protection to both sides.

THE LONG TERM

Of course, the employers will claim that the demands that we are making will break them.

Since time immemorial employers everywhere have said the same about any demand by workers - from the abolition of child labour to the 4-hour day.

Newspapers are a profitable business and the Fleet Street papers are already reaping the benefits from the successful assaults on staffing that they have won in the past few years.

Of course, the employers have a small army of accountants working to obscure their profits from the eyes of both the taxman and their employees. Most papers' profits are hidden in the accounts of conglomerates, which makes the disguising of profits easy.

However, to take three examples: if we compare the 1976 and 1977 figures for Associated Newspapers we find the number of workers went up very slightly (but a subsidiary company was bought during the year, so, in real terms the number of workers went down). The total wages bill went up by 13.3%, revenue by 22.3%, trading profit by 35.3%. Similarly for Thompson, owners of The Times, number of workers employed went down a little, total wages up by 10%, trading profit up by 31.5%. For Reed International, owners of the Daily Mirror, the UK workforce dropped by 3,000, UK wages bill went up by 9.8%, revenue went up by 39% and trading profit was almost doubled.

All these figures show the real value of the total wages going down while the real value of the profits goes up. The one causes the other. Money is taken out of our wage packets and put straight into the employers' profits. At the same time, they are trying to get more production per worker to increase profits even more. The successes they are clearly getting already have merely whetted their appetite for more.

When Thompson is making an average trading profit of £1,200 per employee, we can see that the employers' moans about losing money are merely a ploy to get us to cut our own throats without a fight.

In the last resort why should we subsidise employers even if they do lose money? For that's what their appeals to us really mean. They want us to take a cut in our collective wages, to dip into our pockets in order to fill theirs.

If the tiny clique of millionaires and millionaire corporations who have a stranglehold on the press in this country don't want to pay the price for their mouthpieces, they should give them up and

let the workers take them over.

That would certainly mean a fleet press than what we have today, and one less biased against the unions and less subservient to big business.

We can also expect to be told of the threat from competition. We will be told that all the other houses are reducing staffing levels and if 'we' don't follow suit then 'we' will go broke. Of course the competition also employ Natscapa clerical and are telling their employees the same story, at the same time. It's not our business to fight the employers' competitive battles by doing down our own members in other houses. That's why we need a united policy to counter this divide and rule manoeuvre.

CONCLUSION

WE ARE NOT opposed to new machinery as such. We don't want to go back to quill pens and high stools.

The question is not whether we are for or against the new technology but who will it benefit? Will it benefit the few or the many? The rich or the poor? The shareholder or the worker? THEM OR US?

The whole history of the trade union movement has been the history of a struggle to ensure that those who created the wealth, we the workers, enjoyed the benefits of our labour. Our battle with new technology is just such a battle. It could mean shorter working hours, more leisure and a freer press, or it can mean fat profits and a wasted generation of young people on the dole.

We believe that the policies that we have outlined are in the finest traditions of the trade union movement.

We are not talking about a simple fight for wages and conditions, we are talking about a moral crusade to end the idea that trade unionists can benefit by putting someone else on the dole queue.

Join our campaign, our fight. Sign the petition and fight for a full discussion of all the vital issues in this document.

